DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 301 184 IR 013 524

AUTHOR Tanney, B. L.
TITLE Films That Teach about Suicide.
PUB DATE 14 Jul 88
NOTE 6p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Suicidology (Washington, DC, April 1988).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents; *Audiovisual Aids; Documentaries; Film Criticism; *Films; Foreign Countries; *High Risk Persons; High Schools; Junior High Schools; Preadolescents; *Suicide
IDENTIFIERS *Suicide Information and Educ Centre AB

ABSTRACT

This survey of audiovisual productions on the topic of youth suicide identified all available audiovisual productions in the area of adolescent suicides through existing catalogs and reviews, contacts, and specialized database searches; 99 films or videotape productions were then screened and reviewed as part of the development of a catalog by the Suicide Information Education Centre (SIEC). It was found that almost half of the audiovisual productions appropriate for the junior high and high school levels had been produced in the past three years, and that the largest number of productions were documentaries. Most were acceptable in terms of technical production and/or content, and there was a significant number of very high quality productions in this area. In the experience of the review panel, the year of production was not an effective criterion for judging the usefulness of audiovisual materials, i.e., new was not better. Recent documentaries often involve brief interviews with or comments by youth or groups of youths who speak powerfully for themselves about self-destructive behavior. While earlier documentaries focused on warning signs and case findings, more recent presentations focus on available resources and solutions for young people. A full catalog of these audiovisual productions is available from SIEC, which intends to continue to update the catalog. (EW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED301184

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
[X] This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
[ ] Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
B.L. Tanney
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

FILMS THAT TEACH ABOUT SUICIDE

Over the past decade, the clinical fact that it is important to confront and talk about suicide directly with a person at risk has been extended to justify large scale primary prevention programs which aim to increase awareness about suicide. Activities include extending awareness of suicide in the general population, providing knowledge and skills to active care givers in the area, and altering societal attitudes towards suicidal behaviors and those persons who may be at risk. The strategy is not unique to suicide. Providing information about personal health care issues has been widely used as a prevention model in other areas, including substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, and AIDS. Because a large increase in both numbers and rates of suicidal behaviors has been recorded over the past quarter century in the youth population, (many of whom are still involved in organized education), the application of this education approach to the youthful at-risk group has led to information about suicide being directly incorporated into junior and senior high school curricula in many states.

These curricula, and other programs which aim to sensitize and to inform about complex human behaviors like suicide, require sound educational planning and techniques. Learning aids are widely used in these learning experiences to reinforce, introduce and illustrate content issues. Audio-visual productions are the most common of these learning aids. They include a variety of formats: flip charts and transparencies, film strips and slide tape presentations, and the sophistication of 16 mm and videotape productions. The audio-visual medium

IR013524

is powerful and effective at many levels, including the direct transmission of information, the modelling of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors for both persons at risk and caregivers, and the creation and shaping of attitudes through the artful composition of words, pictures, and music.

The Suicide Information and Education Centre (SIEC) includes audio-visual materials, in its' collection of materials related to suicidal behaviors. Because the focus of this collection is on educational and scholarly materials, motion pictures developed for commercial entertainment are not included. Since 1955, only two audio-visual productions on elderly suicides could be identified, but a very large number in the content area of youth suicide were available. SIEC undertook to review and to catalogue all of these productions as a resource to those who develop and present information and awareness programs about suicide.

METHOD

All available audio-visual productions in the area of youth suicide were identified using existing catalogues and reviews, through contacts and networking in the motion picture, educational, and suicide prevention communities, and through searches of specialized data bases such as AV-Line. To the end of 1987, 105 film or videotape productions in this area were identified, along with six filmstrip productions. Virtually all of these materials were obtained for preview and for inclusion in a comprehensive catalogue of audio-visual resources. Cataloguing variables included: title, year of production, available formats, running time, producer, sponsors and

distributors, production category, recommended audiences, rating/recommendation, review and synopsis, and availability of an accompanying guide or printed materials. Excluding film strips, detailed information was obtained on 99 of the 105 productions.

RESULTS

The following tables summarize the available audio-visuals in the areas of youth suicide.

YOUTH SUICIDE AUDIO-VISUALS

i) PRODUCTION CATEGORIES

Documentary	Short Feature	Feature	Training Materials	Total
54	22	12	11	99

ii) QUALITY OF PRODUCTION (% RATING A-D) BY CATEGORY

RATING	Documentary	Short Feature	Feature	Training Material	Total
A	24	14	30	25	22
B	26	33	10	13	25
C	34	24	50	13	28
C-/D	16	29	10	50	21

iii) YEAR OF PRODUCTION

	%
1985-88	47
1982-84	15
1979-81	13
1976-78	12
early years	14

iv) RECOMMENDED AUDIENCES

	No. of productions
Youth	47
At risk youth	23
Care givers	23
Health care professionals	21
Multicultural	7
Bereaved	5

DISCUSSION

Almost half of the available audiovisual productions have been developed or released within the past three years. Some of the short features and training materials were rated as clearly unsatisfactory. There are few feature length productions available, but most were of acceptable or even exceptional quality. The largest number of productions were documentaries. Most were acceptable in respect of technical production and/or content, and there were a significant number of very high quality productions in this area. When rated for particular audiences, productions developed for health care professionals received the highest over-all ratings.

In the experience of the review panel, year of production is not an effective criterion for judging the usefulness of an audio-visual: 'new is not better'. During the latter part of this review period, a shift in the category of productions being developed was noted with more documentaries and training materials and a notable dearth of short feature productions. Several recent trends in content could also be discerned. Recent documentaries often involve brief interviews or comments with youth or groups of youth who powerfully speak for themselves about their thoughts and feelings concerning self-

destructive behavior. Earlier productions focused on warning signs and case finding, but a more recent trend towards the presentation of available resources and solutions for young people considering suicide is a notable content improvement. Technical cinematic and production values are often at barely acceptable professional levels, but several very powerful recent productions raise the spectre of modelling or contagion. In fact, some well-rated productions have been withdrawn because of this concern.

CONCLUSION

Good audio-visual learning materials are available in all production categories and for all audiences. It is unfortunate that there are virtually no materials dealing with issues of suicidal behavior in the adult or elderly populations, and only a very small number dealing with specialized issues of bereavement and multiculturalism. Production costs are estimated at $2-5,000.00 per finished minute of production for high quality audio-visuals. The development of effective audio-visuals should involve professional collaboration between content specialists and experienced film-makers. A full catalogue of these audio-visual productions is available from SIEC. SIEC intends to continue and to update it's catalogue of available audio-visual productions.

B.L. Tanney, M.D., F.R.C.P. (C)
Associate Professor
Faculty of Medicine
University of Calgary

88/07/14 BLT/jll